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Letter dated 13 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ambassadorial Group in New York to share with you the concern of OIC over Israel's decision to force-feed Palestinian hunger-striking prisoners. OIC stresses that forcibly feeding hunger strikers constitutes a flagrant violation of international human rights norms and standards, which forbid the force-feeding of detainees. OIC further stresses that Israel, the occupying Power, should fully respect the freedom, dignity and rights of Palestinian prisoners.

On 30 July 2015, the Israeli Parliament passed the so-called "Law to Prevent Harm Caused by Hunger Strikes", which sanctions the force-feeding of Palestinian hunger-striking prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons. The new law, in effect, empowers the courts to permit doctors who treat prisoners on hunger strike to feed them against their will, which violates the Patients' Rights Law.

It is important to note that the International Committee of the Red Cross opposes force-feeding and stresses the need to respect the choices and to preserve the dignity of detainees. Equally important, the Malta Declaration, which was adopted by the World Medical Association, states that "Any decisions lack moral force if made involuntarily by use of threats, peer pressure or coercion. Hunger strikers should not be forcibly given treatment they refuse. Forced feeding contrary to an informed and voluntary refusal is unjustifiable. Artificial feeding with the hunger striker's explicit or implied consent is ethically acceptable ... Forcible feeding is never ethically acceptable. Even if intended to benefit, feeding accompanied by threats, coercion, force or use of physical restraints is a form of inhuman and degrading treatment. Equally unacceptable is the forced feeding of some detainees in order to intimidate or coerce other hunger strikers to stop fasting."

It should be recalled that, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Israeli authorities resorted to the forced feeding of prisoners to forcefully break their hunger strikes, which resulted in the death of three prisoners: 'Abd Al-Qader Abu Al-Fahem (11/05/1970), Rasem Halawi (07/20/1980) and Ali Al-Jaafari (07/24/1980). It should

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also be noted that more than 207 Palestinian prisoners and detainees have died in the Israeli occupation prisons since 1967, of whom 74 were deliberately murdered, 73 died as a result of torture under interrogation and 54 died as a result of intentional medical negligence by the medical staff of the Israeli Prison Service.

Instead of using criminal methods that violate medical ethics and international law, Israel should address the injustices that have forced prisoners to resort to hunger strikes, end its practice of administrative detention without charge or trial and provide humane conditions for Palestinian prisoners. Israel should stop immediately its attempt to break the prisoners' will by violating their human rights, including the right of autonomy over one's body, in an attempt to deprive prisoners of the only means of peaceful protest left at their disposal.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mansour **Alotaibi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait
Chair of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation